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ABSTRACT

Viewing expression of affection as a problem in interpersonal communication, the author surveys psychological theories of affection and hostility. A brief summary of Freud's concepts of "death wish" and "eros" and a thorough consideration of Menninger's approach to re-direction of self-love are included, along with an overview of recent developments in group psychotherapy. Rado's approach to attainment of "affectionate respect," May's approach to the "myth of care," Roger's view of group acceptance as a solution to feelings of estrangement, and Allport's solutions to the individual's problems in reconciling affiliation and autonomy needs are discussed in detail. Neo-Freudian and existentialist schools of psychology, it is noted, promise more positive forms of interpersonal communicative behavior than did the Freudian view, which accepted the predominance of destructive tendencies in human nature. (BLB)

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THE PROBLEM OF LOVE: A SURVEY OF THEORETICAL LITERATURE

Abstract

The expression of affection, or what Gordon Allport has called "affiliative desires," is a perennial problem in interpersonal small-group communication. Freudian orientations to group life and the problem of love or "Eros" stress the predominance of pressures toward non-affiliation, and are unpromising of creative solutions. Newer schools of psychological thought increasingly take a more positive approach to what is here called "the problem of love," reversing the figure-ground relationship of love and hate from the Freudian view of aggression as the background from which affiliative behavior may evolve, holding that it is out of abortive attempts at affiliation that "hate" emerges. To put it in positive terms, affiliative tendencies provide the motivation for group life, and it is only when such tendencies are thwarted that aggressive tendencies emerge in protest. The work of such theorists as Allport, Rado, Maslow and Rogers appears to provide solutions to the problem of the expression of love in groups, reversing the trend of thought of such theorists as Freud and Menninger.

The present paper examines the possibility that the expression in groups of affiliative tendencies is thwarted by cultural pressures. In this connection, the importance of childhood experiences and training is stressed. The proposal for correcting this situation as outlined by Rado is briefly described.

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The present review of the literature concerned with "the problem of love" appears to show that the negative Freudian approach is being gradually supplanted by the positive approach of contemporary psychology. The norms which militate against the expression of love, according to the newer theorists, may be changed to the end of bringing about a healthier norm which will not only reveal the former as pathological, but also bring about more positive forms of gratification in interpersonal communication.

THE PROBLEM OF LOVE:
A SURVEY OF THEORETICAL LITERATURE

The expression of affection is a perennial problem in interpersonal communication. It is obviously of paramount importance in the primary groups of marriage and family life; its importance in the relationships among members of "small groups," in settings beyond the family, is less well recognized. On this broader scale, the words "affection" or "love" are translated to "affiliation." Gordon Allport states: "A persistent defect of modern psychology is its failure to make a serious study of the affiliative desires and capacities of human beings [2:199]." This paper will consider some of the psychological approaches which have been made to the problem, and to its correlate, the expression of hostility.

Freudian psychology concentrates its attention on the problem of hostility. For Freud, the destructive impulse, or "death wish," was the primary source of motivation for human behavior. Insofar as "Eros," the life instinct, could ameliorate the effects of this primary aggressiveness, civilized group life could occur. The creativeness of Eros was strongly emphasized by Freud, particularly with reference to its civilizing function [3, 15, et. seq.]; yet Freudian psychology essentially perceives love as a figure against a background of hate. Creative impulses maintain a precarious balance, if they do so at all, with destructive forces. In the end, destructive forces always win, both symbolically and actually, as is proved by the ineluctable circumstance of death.

The concept of the "death wish" has been widely rejected by modern psychology; yet an influential exponent of the concept is still to be found in Karl Menninger. He accepts the idea of primary aggressiveness as the most powerful aspect of personality, and holds that ways must be found "to diminish or socialize" this element. At the same time, he continues: "We should consider the coordinate possibilities of encouraging and strengthening the erotic element [5, 434]."

Menninger's view is that the destructive impulses in man, directed either against others or against himself, may be diminished or re-directed primarily through emotional re-education, as in psychoanalytic treatment. The most effective change would result from radical revisions in methods of training children; but as a practical matter, he sees little hope of this occurring, due to deeply ingrained cultural norms. As for "strengthening the erotic element," Menninger is also somewhat pessimistic: "It is a great temptation to . . . speak in general terms of the need for more love in the world, the desirability of encouraging frank expressions of emotional life in children, the improvement of parental patterns of affection. To do so, however valid, is only to join in the chorus of religious and inspirational exhortation to 'love one another' [5, 435]." He goes on to quote a remark by Sandor Ferenczi, who is said to have exclaimed, "They <u>want</u> to love one another, but they don't know how!"

Menninger's suggestions for correcting this state of ignorance center on the treatment of narcissism. Self-love must be re-directed to appropriate outside objects. Here again, his approach is pessimistic. Narcissism is of such early origin in the individual that it may be

incurable, even by psychotherapy. In some cases, treatment may succeed; in others, he states: "Any and all attempts to treat the narcissistic disease -- no matter how skillful -- only make matters worse. The wound is incurably deep; the fear of further hurt is too great [5, 436]."

As to the development of appropriate outside love objects, Menninger is somewhat more positive. He stresses the importance of "the cultivation of meaningful friendships [5, 438];" but there immediately follows this warning:

> The greatest barrier, however, is internal. The capacity for friendship depends upon a kind of inner vitality which permits a strong erotic component to be injected into all human relationships. . . . At least one of the parties must bring to the relationship a nurturing attitude as a protection against the ambivalence and narcissistic demands that arise in every human contact. . . . Most people are unable to support many friendships upon these terms. [5, 439, stress added].

Menninger's most hopeful suggestions have to do with the adoption of hobbies of a creative, artistic nature: "Many will begin by loving art and end by loving one another [5, 440];" and in the choice of "helping" careers involving group contacts. Such professions as social work, teaching, medicine, and many others, he writes, "may represent a sublimated expression of the erotic instinct, an expression of love that reaches out beyond the self and the immediate personal love objects to the 'neighbor' . . . whom our most primitive instinct arrays us against, but whom our self-preservation demands that we cherish [5, 442]."

Menninger's Freudian orientation, with its emphasis on the nearly ineradicable effects of early childhood trauma which negate or distort the individual's capacity for wholesome expressions of love, does not provide a very encouraging outlook for the solution of the problem with

which this paper is concerned. What solutions he proposes, he almost at once strikes down, or cripples, by stating the difficulty of their attainment. More recent developments in psychological theory and research are somewhat more positive and hopeful. This paper will not attempt to review the vast literature of empirical and experimental research in group interaction, the focus of which is increasingly turning to problems of affiliative needs. A statement from Stock and Thelen is representative of the work being done in this area:

> For most groups, the direction of improvement does not lie in suppressing emotionality, but rather in controlling it by letting it reveal motivations to work. That is, we want members to be "emotionally involved" in the task; but nobody gets emotionally involved in a task. What we get involved in is our needs for status, our fears of deprivation, our desires for success, our attachments to one another, our fear of emotion, our desires for a rational world [8, 251].

Writing in regard to group psychotherapy, Whitaker and Lieberman state one of its benefits, which points to a solution to the problem, on a practical level: "Cohesiveness may be built into enabling solutions, as, for example, when mutual acceptance becomes established as a group solution, reduces certain fears, and allows patients to express themselves more freely [9, 274]."

From the growing body of research in group process, of which the above two citations are representative, may be inferred many possibilities for channeling destructiveness and promoting "the erotic element," to use Menninger's terms. At a very concrete level, such research is trying to solve the problem he found so discouraging.

Such research has gone hand in hand with theory which exceeds, and in some cases departs from, Freudian theories. A Neo-Freudian, Sandor

Rado, advances his own theory of groups in these words:

> The more a group organization respects the individual's dignity as a human being, the greater its chances for survival and healthy growth. Members of a group may have three kinds of emotional relationship to one another: contemptuous hate, indifference, and affectionate respect. The first is self-liquidating, the second inadequate; the . . . optimum for creative cooperation may be achieved only by the third [6, 1, 317].

Far from adopting the Freudian pessimism of Menninger, Rado has some concrete and constructive suggestions for the attainment of "affectionate respect." He presents a detailed proposal for the revision of the punishment systems prevalent in today's culture, substituting for them an "appreciative reward system [6, 2, 149]." Like Freud, Rado sees hostility as aggravated when the child's early attempts at extraversion of erotic tendencies [5, 81] are thwarted and punished. A vicious circle is created, and carries infantile behavior patterns over into adult life, usually unconsciously, as a fear to love. Rado courageously proposes that one can learn to abort expressions of rage; one can learn adaptive mechanisms to handle aggressive instincts; it is possible to learn how to love.

Rado has developed his own theoretical system, which he calls "adaptational psychodynamics." A more familiar, and rapidly growing, theoretical approach to psychology is existentialism. American psychologists who have identified themselves with this (originally) philosophical orientation include Rollo May, Gordon Allport, and Carl Rogers [cf. 10].

In a 1967 lecture, May expressed the crux of his philosophical and psychological theories in terms of "myths;" i.e., the sustaining traditions of society. He acknowledged the need for the expression of anger;

yet he urged that a new "myth" be created which would equate anger and love, allowing existence to both. Without freedom to express anger, the freedom to express love is denied. Finally, he proposed the "myth of care," to combat the problems of alienation in modern society. He stated: "Life is made significant through caring and love for others. It is the only way we can overcome the apathy and cynicism of our day [4]."

For his part, Carl Rogers identifies two elements in his paper "The Loneliness of Contemporary Man" as those of estrangement from himself, and estrangement from others. In regard to the latter, he writes: "When there is no relationship in which we are able to communicate both aspects of our divided self -- both our conscious facade and our deeper level of experiencing -- then we feel the loneliness of not being in real touch with any other human being [7, 94]." Such communication requires that groups strive for the atmosphere of freedom and "acceptance" mentioned by Whitaker and Lieberman. The conventional prohibition of the expression both of love and hate militates against the kind of communication which Rogers here sees as so essential to the eradication of "loneliness."

Finally, Gordon Allport has had a great deal to say. If the "defect in modern psychology" to which he referred above is beginning to be corrected, it may be in part due to the leadership of this influential man. He reverses the figure-ground relationship of love and hate as earlier set out by Freud, and states: "It is inescapably true that hostility derives its very existence from the prior groundwork of affiliative desire with which it so sharply contrasts. Unless one first loves,

one cannot hate. For hatred is an emotion of protest, directed always toward . . . obstructions that prevent one from reaching objectives that are positively valued -- that is, loved [2, 200-201]." The affiliative need, he holds, is primary. It is hatred which must be learned. Further, he adds another dimension to the problem. In addition to the need for affiliation, which he characterizes as "tribal," Allport also postulates a need for individuation, characterized as "personal." It is this "demand for autonomy," often interpreted as aggression, which accounts for much of the conflict in group life. Describing the human infant, Allport writes: "All his life long this being will be attempting to reconcile these two modes of becoming, the tribal and the personal: the one that makes him into a mirror, the other that lights the lamp of individuality within [1, 35]."

The group's threat to the integrity of the individual thus may account for much of his hostility toward it. Simple recognition of this interplay of needs may greatly serve to reduce the dangers involved. Ultimately, Allport finds that "personal integrity is entirely compatible with a wide circle of affiliation [2, 215]." His proposal to effect this reconciliation of opposites is: "to maximize situations in which the individual can participate fully and on terms of equal status in projects of joint concern to him and his associates. By so doing, we shall realize affiliation, safeguard self-esteem and reduce hostility [2, 215]."

The full participation which Allport sees as a means to the wholesome integration of the individual in the group would allow for the free expression of both love and hostility. It seems that the cathartic expression of hostility serves to break open the shell which has served to

over-isolate the individual. Unless non-accepting punishments are then enforced, making it necessary for the shell to be reconstructed, it may be that the love which was hidden inside can also be revealed.

This paper has briefly reviewed certain influential schools of psychology in regard to their views on the problem of the expression of feelings of love and hate in group life. The Freudian school of thought, with its near-fatalistic acceptance of the predominance of destructive tendencies, has been unpromising of creative solutions to the problem. Neo-Freudian and existentialist views are more hopeful in their stand. Here is proposed a frontal, optimistic, attack on the cultural norms and traditions which Freud rightly postulated as the source of the problem, but which he seems to have accepted as inescapable. In what seems an appropriate closing statement for this paper, Abraham Maslow contradicts that view: "Certainly it seems more and more clear that what we call "normal" in psychology is really a psychopathology of the average, so undramatic and so widely spread that we do not even notice it ordinarily. The existentialist's study of the authentic person and of authentic living helps to throw this general phoniness, this living by illusions and by fear, into a harsh, clear light which reveals it clearly as sickness, even though widely shared [10, 64]."

The norms which have militated against the expression of love, according to Maslow and his contemporaries, may be changed to the end of bringing about a healthier norm which will not only reveal the former as pathological, but also lead to more positive and gratifying forms of interpersonal communicative behavior.

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